

EAA November Demonstration at the Church

Monday, November 4, 2024 7:00p.m.

Chris Coffey - "His Photographs, Working in Projects & Creating a Bio"



The November meeting featured national award winning photographic artist, **Chris Coffey**. The 27 members and guests in attendance enjoyed his talk about his photographs and his approach to working in projects — some long term and some unexpected and hiding in plain sight. He also briefly talked about crafting an Artist Bio and the Artist Statement in general as well as those written for a specific body of work.

Using a Keynote presentation, Chris talked about the 'building blocks' of his life's journey into photography, weaving an interesting story. He was born in coastal Texas, moved to Michigan at age 5, had an understanding mother, was good at music (a drummer) but not good enough, sold dresses at Randall Park Mall and to quote him, "fell down seven times, got up eight!" Throughout the journey he was always fascinated with tall trees, factories, rail yards and green spaces. While in the third grade, many elm trees had to be cut down due to disease. That's when he started capturing their memory by drawing them with crayons, eventually photographing them. The tension between the trees, the edges, the straight lines and reflections is what he looked to capture on film. Knowing that he couldn't make his equipment do "what I see and feel", Chris moved to a large format camera where he could control the lens angle. This format gave him more artistic control in black & white.

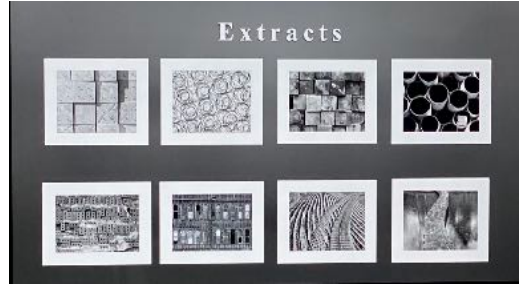
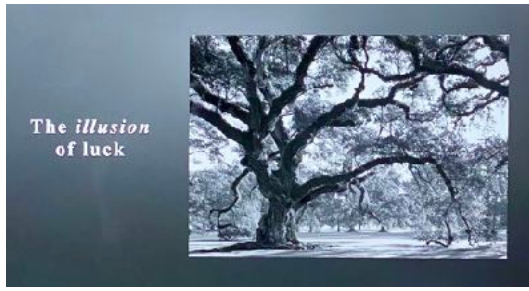


"As a photographer and backcountry traveler, the goal was to bring home the experience." In one of his slides, he explained how he works: He walks a lot, using his iPhone as a 'scouting' tool. Have a beginner's mind... "you must be open, open, open." "An uncomfortable situation with new work is the best place to be." To quote photographic artist & publisher, David Vestal (1924 - 2013)... "look at, not for". Chris prints his own images in the darkroom that he built.

From 1993 to 2023, he made a living doing 'Street Art Fairs'. He was also appointed Grand Canyon North Rim artist in residence in 2005... one of only three per year! His favorite trees were the Aspens. Always looking to "invest in my craft", he studied under Ansel Adams' assistant.

In 2007 Chris made a 'seismic' shift from working in single images to working in projects. His first project, a photo of four white oak trees, he called "The Girls". Next he shared several images, in what he called, "The Illusion of Luck". Lastly, he shared another project, a product of the "winter purge" called "Extracts", a.k.a. abstracts. It's a portfolio of "common stuff we all walk by", like stairs, geometric shapes, etc. A few other tidbits from his presentation: nothing is cropped, you need to know where to stand; a clear blue sky is not interesting in b&w, you need snow, fog, mist.





Chris's work is so stunning that he can easily be considered the Ansel Adams of current times. This write up does not do justice to his journey or his photography. It's best written by him in his artist statement on his website <https://www.chriscoffey.com/>. Please read more there....

At the end, Chris projected a slide with good information about creating an artist statement versus a bio. Ellen Howard brought the EAA Bio Book to the meeting. She explained the importance of having members' bio information in the book, as it is displayed for visitors to view during our Spring Fine Art Shows. Only about 15% of our members have a bio and many are out of date. In addition to the information below, Chris suggested the bio include pictures of you working.

A message from the management

- CV vs. Artist Statement vs. Bio
- Normal artist statement is the bridge for your viewers - no "I's" or "me's" and no art speak — IT'S ABOUT THE WORK
- An artist statement for a project is even *more* directed away from you and to the work
- You have to practice different lengths
- Change *often* — search engine optimization
- Bios a good place for education and process but don't write it for other artists
It is your connection to the public, collectors
- Set a reminder on your calendar to rewrite it — 6 times a year, 4, just don't let it sit beyond its *freshness* date.



Afterwards, Coffey mentored young James, a budding photographer, on his images and everyone enjoyed the refreshment table. Thanks to all who brought goodies, especially to Cynthia for all that pizza!

